



**NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING
ALAMEDA RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION
MINUTES FOR SPECIAL MEETING**

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Thursday, September 10, 2009

TIME: 7:15 p.m.

PLACE: Room 360, City Hall, corner of Santa Clara Avenue and Oak Street, Alameda, CA 94501

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Terri Ogden, Recreation Commission Chair, called meeting to order.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Terri Ogden, Vice Chair Joe Restagno, Commissioners Lola Brown, Mike Cooper, Jo Kahuanui, and Bill Sonneman

Staff: Dale Lillard, ARPD Director
Jackie Krause, Senior Services Manager (SSM)
Patrick Russi, Recreation Supervisor (RS)

Absent: Commissioner Gina Mariani

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion of Measure WW Funding – (Discussion/Action Item)

Chair Ogden opened the discussion for the speakers.

Dorothy Freeman, Alameda resident and Estuary Park representative, stated that the Estuary Park Committee has come before the Recreation & Park Commission before to discuss the need for funds to develop/purchase Estuary Park. At that time the Commission told the Estuary Park Committee that the projects on the Measure WW list were so important that they had to come first. Now we go to the City Council Meeting and find out that the Measure WW project list is not so important and that we have to spend funds on the Alameda Boys & Girls Club. Nobody is at this meeting to say anything against the Alameda Boys & Girls Club, but they are a private organization and our parks need the funds. There are parks all over this State that are crying for money. The Council has no business even considering giving this money to a private organization when this money was voted for by the people to serve all of our citizens. If

we start doing this how are Alameda citizens going to feel about future bond issues for parks and that they cannot trust the fact that if they vote for the money to go to parks the money will be there. The Estuary Park and Alameda Beltline representatives look forward being able to have a bond issue to get money for Estuary Park and Alameda Beltline projects. Ms. Freeman would hate to see this idea put in jeopardy just because we want to give money that belongs to the people to a private organization.

Joseph Woodard, Alameda resident, provided a copy of a letter that he sent to EBRPD protesting the monies being given to the Alameda Boys & Girls Club. For the record, at the Council Meeting on September 1, the number of speakers for and against the Boys & Girls Club receiving the money was about equal. The Alameda Boys & Girls Club managed to pack half of the Council chambers with employees and Board Members. The people speaking against the idea were not employees of anyone, but were private citizens. People who voted for the bond issue thought that it was to be used for parks. You have maintenance projects and certainly have new acquisitions that are very important. This opportunity is absolutely unprecedented with regard to the Alameda Beltline, where a large park space will be purchased for less than \$1 million and now money is being proposed to be diverted to a private organization. This is unconscionable and hopes that the Recreation & Park Commission will do everything in their power to oppose it.

Barbara Kerr, former Councilmember and Alameda resident, stated that a group went to EBRPD for a sub-committee meeting and after spoke to Mr. Rasmussen (grant manager). The committee was very sympathetic, but the grant manager was not. She expressed a criticism that this is something that needs to be remedied. Mr. Rasmussen was basing his decision on the Alameda Boys & Girls Club and only on what the Boys & Girls Club had told him. Ms. Kerr was surprised at his resistance. She recommends that the EBRPD, through whatever process, needs more cross communication from the City and citizens. Ms. Kerr stated that what bothered her at the last Council Meeting was the aggressive attempt to bypass the Recreation & Park Commission. She does not feel that any Board or Commission should ever be considered insignificant the way the Recreation & Park Commission was at the last Council Meeting. The Council needs to hear from staff and the public about all projects that are worth while and need to be heard together on an equal basis. We need to let the Council know how we feel about their just trying to bypass one of our Boards and Commissions, meaning the Recreation & Park Commission.

Gretchen Lipow, Alameda resident, provided the Commission with the text/definition of Measure WW. Ms. Lipow stated that she was amazed at the galvanized Alameda Boys & Girls Club at the Council Meeting on September 1. When you look at the Measure WW language it talks about protecting creeks, wild life, purchase and save open space, wetlands, bay shorelines, acquire, develop and improve local and regional parks, trails and recreational facilities. She was trying to figure out what justified doing anything for the Boys & Girls Club, and the only thing that she could see that would apply was recreational facilities. When you look at the other needs, new parks – Estuary Park and Beltline, they cover so many other factors in the initiative itself. These projects would encompass improving local parks, trails, open space, etc. People went to the ballot box to vote, they did not vote to put money into the Alameda Boys & Girls Club. Ms. Lipow was really disappointed and thinks that this is an unfair process. She encouraged everyone to go to the next Council meeting and speak their mind.

Rebecca Redfield, Alameda resident, stated that her son attended the Alameda Boys & Girls Club until they recently closed. She has moved to where the potential park was going to be in the warehouse area on Clement Avenue and had moved there based on the planning map and hopes there will be a park in that area. We have been working hard and putting energy toward acquiring funds toward this park and now suddenly the Alameda Boys & Girls Club thinks they should get the money. This is a step backward in the dream for a park in that area.

Jean Sweeney, Alameda Beltline representative and Alameda resident, stated that she was one of the participants in the meeting with Mr. Rasmussen and the Ecology panel. The people on the Ecology Panel were a little dismayed that Mr. Rasmussen would send an e-mail favoring a Boys & Girls Club project. They did not seem to think that it would fit within a category. The Panel stated that the process is not to have it referred by City Council. The process is to have an open meeting where everybody can discuss what they want to do with the funds. This is City money and a City decision and a decision to be made by the City Council. The projects are sent to the Council, the City then takes them to Mr. Rasmussen who then consults with EBRPD lawyers to find out if the projects are eligible. To short cut them/the process by having a communication between George Phillips and Mr. Rasmussen based on Mr. Phillips own material is patently unfit. Mr. Rasmussen sat there and stated that anybody can go to the Boys & Girls Club, it is free.

Ms. Sweeney stated that we all know that is not true. He (Mr. Rasmussen) did not even know where the Boys & Girls Club was located until she showed him the location. He did not know that the building does not include a field for recreation and that they are going to depend on Woodstock Park for their outdoor field and activities. He did not know that the Boys & Girls Club was really a social development organization and not a recreation organization. He did not know that they were going to have room for family services to do counseling, a room for medical screening, etc. Mr. Rasmussen did not understand the mission of the Boys & Girls Club. It is not a recreation program; it is a private organization and is not free. It gears itself to school-age children; it is closed on Sundays, closes early on Saturdays, and closes every day at 6:00 p.m. He told me that Chipman does not have a gymnasium, but she remembers that there was someone who had a special program to keep the Chipman gymnasium open for activities. She looked into the Boys & Girls Club itself and they said they had a program, when she substituted at the school (Chipman) they had activities in the Chipman gymnasium. Mr. Rasmussen stated that now Chipman will have a gymnasium through the Boys & Girls Club. Ms. Sweeney stated that he (Mr. Rasmussen) needs to have a more biased presentation of where this money should go. It should go to our parks. In talking with Director Lillard, the number of people who participate in the City's recreation and park activities during the year is in the tens of thousands. Ms. Sweeney would not be upset if \$1 million went to the Alameda Beltline, \$1 million to Estuary Park, and \$1.4 million went to recreation and parks. She does not understand why the Boys and Girls Club wants to apply for a couple of hundred boys that use a big building and deserve to have the Measure WW bond funds. The Boys and Girls Club does a wonderful job with kids but it is not a recreational facility.

Pat Bail, Alameda resident, stated that a similar agreement was done with the College of Alameda but the difference was that the City was in control of the project and 25-year agreement with the option to reevaluate when the 25-year agreement was up. With the Boys and Girls Club request they are talking about handing over \$2 million to a private organization; we have no control, no input, we will never get the money back. Passive parks are great, but when she thinks for recreation she thinks of kids playing on fields,

in the park, on the play apparatus in the parks. She has talked with the Director about park improvements and the list is extensive. It should be a priority in all of our minds that our greatest asset is our children. While she thinks that the Boys and Girls Club is a great program, they have the ability through their non-profit to raise funds. She understands that they are in threat of losing their grant if they do not receive the \$2 million. Ms. Bail suggested possibly loaning the Boys and Girls Club the funds with a decent interest rate (this does not mean she is in favor of the suggestion) to be paid back. To give the Boys and Girls Club the \$2 million out-right is just not in the books. We need the money for our parks and for recreation. Someone had said that Ms. Kerr had written an initiative for potentially more park monies. But, in all the years that Ms. Bail has worked with parks and recreation the ARPD has been the ugly step child. All of the City monies have gone to redevelopment, none has gone to recreation and parks which in her mind is one of the more important things we can do in this community. When you receive funds it is important to keep it in our hands because we do not know when we will receive any more funds. For recreation and parks it is very questionable that they will ever get any more funds. Ms. Bail urged the Recreation and Park Commission to write a very strong worded letter to Council.

Ms Bail stated that she will be doing her lobbying against their proposal. She feels that the Boys and Girls Club has the ability to go out and raise their own money, hit up their own sources, and/or go to their national club. Ms. Bail also feels that the City should never support the School District's problems with their recreation monies. They have their own ability to raise their taxes. We are all paying additional taxes for the Schools. The City of Alameda, particularly the Recreation and Park Department, needs to protect their resources and funds. We need to make it very clear to City Council that there will be a lot of very unhappy people if they turn this money over to the Boys and Girls Club without any consideration for the kids in this town that have a great recreational need.

Jim Sweeney, Alameda resident, reiterated what other speakers have said that the Boys and Girls Club is a good organization and we all believe in the good that the Club does. That is not the issue. The issue is a short circuiting of park money needed for park purposes. In looking at all of the 2008 voting materials they are always talking about shorelines, trails, and parks, etc. There is not one word about funneling money over into a private entity no matter how worthy it is. We know that the General Plan has both the Beltline and Estuary Parks in it. They have been in it for quite a while. We need the funds, particularly in this economic crisis that our City is in at this time. It is such a sensitive time. In Mr. Sweeney's mind there is no question of the purpose of the funds. Also, this request/issue came before City Council in a very short time. There was a lot of rushing at the last minute and getting the City Council to make rush to judgment. Mr. Sweeney asked about the application timeline. Director Lillard stated that the application period is January through March with the awarding of the project in April or May of each year.

Mr. Sweeney stated that what we have here is a claimed emergency by the Boys and Girls Club to get the shovel in the ground now. Do not worry about the City of Alameda and what the people want to do. Don't worry about a lot of discussion that is just troublesome.

Ms. Helena Lengel, teacher at College of Alameda, has been working with the Sweeney's for a long time for the Alameda Belt Line area. She is against giving the Measure WW funds to the Alameda Boys and Girls Club.

Ms. Freeman stated that requests for grant monies from Proposition 84 are due March

1, 2010.

Recreation and Park Commission discussed the Alameda Boys & Girls Club project and whether they felt it qualified to be on the list of Measure WW funded projects. Commissioner Brown suggested sending a letter to City Council with the Commission's recommendation.

M/S/C KAHUANUI/RESTAGNO (approved)

“That the Recreation and Park Commission will send a letter to Council stating that the Commission strongly urges the City Council to respect the directive of the voters who supported Measure WW. The voters approved (with their votes) the allocation of funds (through Measure WW) to maintain, acquire and improve the city's Recreation and Parks facilities and grounds.”

Approved (6): Ogden, Restagno , Brown, Cooper, Kahuanui, Sonneman
Absent (1): Mariani

4. ADJOURNMENT